



# Maricopa County

Department of Public Health

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October 15, 2009

Dear School Officials,

This is a quick note on two flu-related issues: school closure, and requesting physicians' notes to allow children to return to class.

With a few schools closing in Arizona, we've received several inquiries regarding the potential of school dismissal here in Maricopa County. You've heard this from me before, but I wish to reiterate, closing individual schools will do nothing to limit the spread of the influenza pandemic in our community. Were the disease uncommon, we might contemplate dismissing a school for a week, then re-open with a disease-free student body. With such widespread infections, however, that won't work.

If any schools close here, it will be because you decide that you've reached a level of absenteeism, in students and/or staff, where it is pointless to continue. We're happy to consult with you in such situations, but it will be your decision. I won't be closing any schools against your wishes.

The second wave of the pandemic has clearly begun. Within the past couple of weeks, numerous schools have been reporting outbreaks of flu, and emergency room visits and hospitalizations have increased substantially. Please continue to keep the pressure up regarding hygiene and continue to send sick kids home.

But please, if at all possible, **do not ask for notes from physicians**. Many are rapidly becoming overwhelmed by such requests, and we need them to have time for their sick patients.

And please work with the mass immunizers who approach you to set up vaccine days in your schools. The vaccine is rolling out disappointingly slowly at first, so I beg you to be flexible in setting up these dates, but take advantage of the opportunity as soon as you can.

Hang in there.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob England".

Bob England, MD, MPH  
Director  
Maricopa County Department of Public Health